Student Leader
Values + Mission + Vision
Handbook

Engineering Leadership Program
Engineering Student Services
College of Engineering
Iowa State University

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Introduction

This handbook was generated to help students think about the purpose and future of their organizations. Student organizations are unique in that they experience transition of student leaders every year. However, that should stop organizations from reviewing their purpose and setting goals for where their organization would like to go in the year to come and beyond!

Every organization possesses a **mission statement** that clearly and powerfully articulates the purpose of the organization. This statement guides decision-making and organizational efforts. The same is true for student organizations. If your organization is an affiliated organization at Iowa State University it possesses a Constitution that articulate the purpose of the organization and establishes its uniqueness among an array of numerous student organizations at the university. Reviewing the mission statement or purpose of the organization regularly is important. Does your mission and purpose still fit the current organization?

Mission statements start with the **values** of the organization. The values of an organization represent the principles and standards for behavior and provide a guide for determining what is important to the organization. Along with establishing the mission or purpose of the organization, values help an organization make difficult decisions, chose a focus for the organization, select membership, and determine programming, to name a few. They very much are the foundation for the group.

Once you have determined what you value as a group and what the mission of the organization is, it is helpful to establish a **vision** for the organization. Student organizations are unique in that they turn over leadership every year. However, this is does not mean that leaders and general members cannot set a vision and goals for the year! It also does not mean that the group cannot think long-term, considering how decisions and actions in the present year move the group forward for year two, three, four, even five! This kind of brainstorming and goal setting can help members in the future take up leadership, as they have a clear idea of where the group has been, but also use their own leadership to continue shaping the vision of the organization into the future.

HOW COOL IS THAT?

Self-Guided
Core Values Assessment

Introduction

The Center for Ethical Leadership believes that an ethical leader is a person who acts with integrity. We define ethical leadership as: *knowing your core values and having the courage to act on them on behalf of the common good.*

This exercise will help you clarify your core values. It is a challenging exercise, and it will be more meaningful if you do it silently and on your own.

During the process you will highlight the values most important to you. To do that, you'll remove some from the list. This *does not mean that you are throwing values away.* The ones you identify as important will always be important. The narrowing process helps you determine your CORE Values. Pay attention to your inner dialogue as you make choices. Your process will reveal interesting truths about yourself.

Thank you for your interest in values and ethical leadership.

Instructions

1. Review the values on the assessment worksheet. At the bottom notice there are a few blank lines. Use these lines to add any values that are important to you, but are not listed.

2. Put a star next to all of the value words that are very important to you, including any you may have added. This will become your personal set of values.

3. Narrow the list to your top **eight** values by crossing off less important ones or circling more important ones. Take two to three minutes to do this.

4. Now narrow the list to **five**, using the same process.

5. Now narrow the list to **three**.

6. And finally, choose your **top two** core values.

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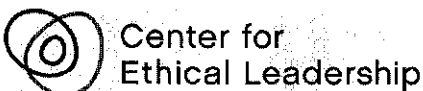
Core Values Exercise

Peace	Integrity
Wealth	Joy
Happiness	Love
Success	Recognition
Friendship	Family
Fame	Truth
Authenticity	Wisdom
Power	Status
Influence	_____
Justice	_____

Making Sense of Your Core Values

You have just discovered, or re-discovered, your core values. Ethical leadership is knowing your core values and having the courage to integrate them with your actions, being mindful of the common good.

➤ Your value words are packed with meaning. You likely went through a process of "bundling:" embedding one value in another and counting two or more values as one. This is not cheating - it's natural. This is why you have not really thrown values away; you have clarified what you mean by these words.

➤ Why two? We ask you to choose two because we believe you can remember two! Imagine putting them in your pockets when you leave each day. Your core values represent your larger set of values.

➤ How can you use them? Your core values can help you make difficult decisions, choose particular lifestyle, select employment, raise a child - the possibilities are endless. They can even help you find common ground with someone you disagree with. The most important thing is that you integrate them into your life as much as you can.

Going beyond the individual

If you do this exercise with your family or another group, try the following task: ask each person to stand and say their core values. Having the courage to stand up for what you believe in is a trait of an ethical leader. Appreciate the diversity, and acknowledge that the results shed light on the values of the group as a whole.

Discuss how you chose your values, what they mean to you, and how you express them. Then reflect on what more you can do to make your core values a part of your daily life. Striving to integrate your values with your actions is another trait of ethical leadership. It's about persistence, not perfection.

It can be as simple as thinking about your values more often. Write your values on a sticky note and post it in prominent places – the refrigerator, your computer, the dashboard, a mirror. Seeing these reminders will encourage you to draw on your core values more often.

Application Opportunities

The core values exercise can be used with an intact group to build common ground, develop a mission statement, resolve conflicts, and improve work relationships. Contact the Center for information on working with a consultant to explore group applications of core values.

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Background Thinking on the Core Values Exercise

1. The list of core values is a **deliberate mixture of popular values and virtues.** Words like influence, success, status, recognition, and wealth are valued by popular culture. Their portrayal in the media is prevalent and tempting. Words like peace, love, integrity, and justice are not often reflected in popular culture, yet are understood to be virtues that sustain a healthy and kind community.

   A virtue is a value that is elemental, a noble habit that directs us toward the good. It is created through the practice of the virtue itself. In other words, in order to achieve justice, you must act in a just manner. In order to become a person of integrity, you have to act with integrity on a daily basis. There are no short cuts!

   The mixed list was created to give participants an opportunity to reflect on the choices available to them. We are bombarded with messages that encourage us to value possessions and status. Yet, when asked to make conscious choices about which values they cherish most, people choose values of a deeper, more meaningful nature. They may wish for comfort and good fortune. These are not bad things, but their "best stuff" usually reflects spirituality, courage, family, love, etc.

   This is important for participants to reflect upon. Identifying their core values gives them the personal power to resist passive conformity to society's more superficial goals. They can use their own core values to build a life of integrity and to create a vision and a lifestyle more embedded with virtuous behavior.

2. In some situations, **words that reflect popular culture have been chosen as core values** by participants in this exercise. It is a matter of personal interpretation, and the facilitator needs to encourage the class to inquire into the person's motivation, rather than to assume this is a shallow, materialistic choice.

   As you facilitate this exercise, a participant will occasionally choose "wealth" as a core value. When asked what "wealth" means to them, they may reply that they want a rich life, defined as being full of good relationships, happiness, health, family and meaningful work, not focusing on the monetary aspect of the word. Some choose the word "success" with a similar definition, as in, "A successful life equates to a life of integrity and meaning."

   Once, visiting Russians chose wealth and power as core values because both were something they had lacked for so long. Faced with overcoming decades of oppressive rule, they recognized wealth and power as the means to a better life – one where people weren't living in poverty, drowning in alcoholism or poor health, with no hope for the future. Wealth and power were the way out for them.

   Other participants have chosen power as a core value, because they believe it is the path to justice. Communities that have suffered from of poverty and discrimination often feel that equity and power are vital to ending the cycles that keep their people down.

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When a participant chooses a word that seems to be a popular value, encourage inquiry and curiosity. By the time a person has sifted and sorted through the exercise, there is more to their core values than meets the eye.

3. **The list is limited yet allows for expansion.** There are 18 values provided in the Core Values exercise. We do not offer a more extensive list in order to focus attention. The list can be expanded, however, by filling the additional lines at the bottom of the exercise. We encourage participants to add value words that are important to them, but do not appear on the page. Participants often add words such as faith/spirituality, courage, community or health.

   We believe that the limited nature of the list does not necessarily limit the choices available to participants. Instead, they are likely to reflect on this list, and on the empty lines, long after the activity. They will become aware of values they express through their behavior and choices, and continue the prioritization process on their own.

4. **The Center's approach to core values is progressive and choice-based.** This means that we believe in an individual's ability to choose for him or herself what is most meaningful in the context of the common good. We believe (and studies have shown) that when a person chooses their own values after careful reflection, he or she is far more likely to act on these values over time.

   This approach differs from many groups that prescribe a set of values. The Boy Scouts are a good example. The values the Scouts espouse are meaningful and worthy, but they are still assigned. While a person can come to "own" values that are assigned over time, most do not connect with the entire list, instead, choosing two or three that resonate most deeply.

   The progressive, choice-based approach to core values also reflects the Center's faith that there is such a thing as universal values. Time and time again, we have observed that, when given the choice, people choose very similar values, or choose different words that mean the same thing.

   When people do this on their own with no external prompting, their own belief in the commonality of humanity is strengthened, and they leave the seminar pondering the values that are universal in nature.

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VALUES EXERCISE ADAPTED FROM TAPROOT (http://www.taproot.com/archives/37771)

1. *Determine your core values.* From the list below, choose and write down every core value that resonates with you. Do not overthink your selections. As you read through the list, simply write down the words that feel like a core value to you personally. If you think of a value you possess that is not on the list, be sure to write it down as well.

Abundance	Daring	Intuition	Preparedness
Acceptance	Decisiveness	Joy	Proactivity
Accountability	Dedication	Kindness	Professionalism
Achievement	Dependability	Knowledge	Punctuality
Advancement	Diversity	Leadership	Recognition
Adventure	Empathy	Learning	Relationships
Advocacy	Encouragement	Love	Reliability
Ambition	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Resilience
Appreciation	Ethics	Making a Difference	Resourcefulness
Attractiveness	Excellence	Mindfulness	Responsibility
Autonomy	Expressiveness	Motivation	Responsiveness
Balance	Fairness	Optimism	Security
Being the Best	Family	Open-Mindedness	Self-Control
Benevolence	Friendships	Originality	Selflessness
Boldness	Flexibility	Passion	Simplicity
Brilliance	Freedom	Performance	Stability
Calmness	Fun	Personal Development	Success
Caring	Generosity	Proactive	Teamwork
Challenge	Grace	Professionalism	Thankfulness
Charity	Growth	Quality	Thoughtfulness
Cheerfulness	Flexibility	Recognition	Traditionalism
Cleverness	Happiness	Risk Taking	Trustworthiness
Community	Health	Safety	Understanding
Commitment	Honesty	Security	Uniqueness
Compassion	Humility	Service	Usefulness
Cooperation	Humor	Spirituality	Versatility
Collaboration	Inclusiveness	Stability	Vision
Consistency	Independence	Peace	Warmth
Contribution	Individuality	Perfection	Wealth
Creativity	Innovation	Playfulness	Well-Being
Credibility	Inspiration	Popularity	Wisdom
Curiosity	Intelligence	Power	Zeal

2. *Group all similar values together from the list of values you just created.* Group them in a way that makes sense to you, personally. Create a maximum of five groupings. If you have more than five groupings, drop those least important. See the example below.

Abundance Growth Wealth Security Freedom Independence Flexibility Peace	Acceptance Compassion Inclusiveness Intuition Kindness Love Making a Difference Open-Mindedness Trustworthiness Relationships	Appreciation Encouragement Thankfulness Thoughtfulness Mindfulness	Balance Health Personal Development Spirituality Well-being	Cheerfulness Fun Happiness Humor Inspiration Joy Optimism Playfulness

3. *Choose one word within each grouping that best represents the label for the entire group.* Again, do not overthink your labels. There are no right or wrong answers. You are defining the answer that is right for you. See the example below – the label chosen for the grouping is bolded.

Abundance Growth Wealth Security **Freedom** Independence Flexibility Peace	Acceptance Compassion Inclusiveness Intuition Kindness Love **Making a Difference** Open-Mindedness Trustworthiness Relationships	Appreciation Encouragement Thankfulness Thoughtfulness **Mindfulness**	Balance Health Personal Development Spirituality **Well-being**	Cheerfulness Fun **Happiness** Humor Inspiration Joy Optimism Playfulness

Creating a Mission Statement

A mission statement should be clear, powerful, and broad enough to guide your decision-making and help explain your organization's efforts to potential members. Thus, the time you and your group spend on developing or revising your mission statement is well spent. The first step in developing an effective mission statement is to seek input from members

Develop a List:

At smaller meetings over the course of weeks (or through emails) ask people to describe the organization's:

- Values
- Core Services
- Unique Attributes

Note: There will be a certain amount of variation in responses, but patterns should appear and when you share the results with the entire group. If your organization cannot come up with a cohesive picture of what it stands for and what it does, you are probably trying to do too much and/or not effectively communicating purpose.

Be Selective:

Once you have captured the group's responses, the next step is to make sense of them. Select a committee of diverse members of the organization to go through the list. Eliminate ideas that do not describe your organization's core services and combine similar concepts (for instance, "finding creative solutions", "being innovative", "thinking outside the box" are all similar values that could be described with one phrase)

Be cohesive:
Now it's time to string the core concepts together. A starting place for a mission statement is *The mission of [Organization Name] is to [verb] the [population served] of [location] through [core services].*

- Think broadly. You do not want your mission statement to be an exhaustive list of what you do. For instance "improve the lives of all NSU students" is better than "provide programs, events, and services to NSU students"

- Give yourself options. Play around with wording and write down two or three potential mission statements.

Vote on it
Take the top ideas to the group and make it official through whatever decision-making process you use.

Sample Mission Statements

Rowan University
Students for Literacy Club
Mission Statement

The Students for Literacy Club is a student organization that was founded in the Spring 2000 semester. The mission of this organization is to educate the university and community about issues involving literacy education. Club members participate in a variety of service projects as well as organize programs to enlighten people about the importance of literacy awareness.

University of New Mexico
Business Law Society
Mission Statement

The UNM Business Law Society is a graduate/professional student organization encouraging participation by all members of the University community. The organization provides a forum to exchange ideas for students interested in business law. It introduces members to practitioners in the field of business law and provides networking opportunities within the business community. UNM BLS advocates corporate social responsibility, ethical management practices, and community involvement. The organization will foster social interaction for students by sponsoring gatherings and recreational activities. It will coordinate events/lectures and work closely with the UNM Anderson School of Management.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Campus NightLife
Mission Statement

The mission of Campus NightLife is to provide a safe variety of on-campus activities that reach out to all University of Nebraska-Lincoln student communities and foster campus wide inclusiveness. Campus NightLife strives to provide consistent entertainment that recognizes and caters to the diverse UNL student population

Georgia Tech
Students Organizing for Sustainability
Mission Statement

The primary focus of this group will be to run grassroots campaigns on a wide range of environmental, political, and social issues in order to promote the greater goal of building a more sustainable campus, community, and world. These issues may include, but will not be limited to: improving on-campus recycling; bringing more nutritious, local, and organic foods to our dining halls; converting the shuttles to run on renewable fuels; and working to bring new sources of clean, efficient energy to the institute.

Overview of Vision and the Visioning Process

A Story from the Middle Ages

Three stone masons in the Middle Ages were hard at work when a visitor came along and asked them what they were doing. The first stone mason was hard at work, sweat beading his brow. "I am cutting this stone," he grumbled. The second stone mason, though less distraught, responded with a deep sigh, "I'm building a parapet." The third stone mason replied with a radiant face, "I am building a beautiful cathedral that will glorify God for centuries to come."

-- Author unknown

A challenging yet achievable vision embodies the tension between what an organization wants and what it can have (Peter Senge, The Fifth Discipline, 1990).

Definition of Vision

A Vision of Success is a clear and succinct description of what the organization or community should look like after it successfully implements its strategies and achieves its full potential. It is an expression by the people about what they want the organization to be – a preferred future, a word or picture of an organization you choose to create.

A Vision statement for an organization should include the organization's:

- mission

- basic philosophy, core values or cultural features

- Goals (if established)

- basic strategies

- performance criteria

- important decision making rules

- ethical standards of all employees

A Vision statement for a community often includes a description of what the community will look like in the

future (related to housing, agriculture, trails etc), and how it will embody opportunities and challenges.

Benefits of a Creating a Vision

- Organizational members can see how they fit in an organization

- Conception precedes perception

- Agreement on vision gives the organization more power

- The more specific and reasonable the vision, the greater the realization

- Can help members recognize barriers to realizing the vision

- May reduce organizational conflict

- Helps the organization stay attuned to its environment

Establishing a Vision

- In most cases, a vision for success is not necessary to improve organizational effectiveness

- Most organizations may want to wait until they go through one or more cycles of strategic planning before developing a detailed vision. New organizations, and communities, however, often establish a vision of what/where they want to be at the beginning of the process to establish consensus on purpose and values to guide issue and strategy identification.

- A vision should include desired outcomes and benefits

- A vision should grow out of past decisions and actions as much as possible

- A vision should be inspirational

- A vision should be widely disseminated and used to help guide organizational decisions and actions

- A vision can be created at any point in a strategic planning activity.

How to establish a Vision - Process

There are several ways to establish a vision. All of these processes should begin with a brief educational overview of what a vision is, what it does, and what the benefits are. In some cases its useful to provide sample vision statements, although we recommend allowing the group to develop a vision statement without being influenced by sample statements. This allows maximum creativity. Your University of Wisconsin-Extension educator can help you design a visioning process that meets your needs.

<u>Example visioning processes:</u>

1. Develop a worksheet with a list of key questions to elicit values, desired future state, challenges, and unique features of the organization from your participants (see resources below for guidance on key questions). Work in small groups (especially when working with a large group of people). After each group has answered the questions and shared them with the larger group, have them craft a vision statement that embodies these answers. Small groups would then work as a big group to combine the parts of each vision statement that they like best. After crafting one draft vision statement, test it against the list above which outlines the key components of a vision statement.

2. For smaller groups, have each person write their own version of a vision statement on a sheet of paper silently for 2-5 minutes. Each person then passes their paper on to their neighbor. The neighbor underlines the key words and phrases they like best. Pass the statements on to the next person, and have them underline the key words and phrases they like best. Repeat until everyone has seen (and underlined) everyone else's vision statement. Use a nominal group or other technique to get the common phrases and words up on a flipchart, and begin crafting a single vision statement.

3. Have each person write the headline of a newspaper story about the organization 20 years in the future that tells about the success the organization has had. Share stories, and develop a list of common vision themes. Use this as a basis for writing a vision statement. Many variations of this process are possible.

4. Describe the future state in words, or with pictures. This is often used as a community-visioning tool, but a variation of it may work for organizations.

Completing your Vision Statement

A vision statement can be drafted in a group, but its probably best to leave the final wordsmithing to a single person, or small volunteer group, so as not to bog down the process. Of course, the final version needs to be reviewed and approved by everyone (usually at the next meeting).

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